



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MEETING

Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee meeting: 20 May 2021: notes

Notes from the meeting of the Flood and Coastal Erosion
Committee on 20 May 2021.

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Meeting no 6: minutes

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Present

Martin Buckle (Chair) (MB) - Flood & Coastal Erosion Committee
James Morris (JM) - Welsh Government
Andy Fraser (AF) - Welsh Government
Chris Curry (Secretariat) - Welsh Government
Lowri Norrington-Davies (LND) - Welsh Government
Steve Owen (SO) - Neath Port Talbot Council
James Davies (JD) - Neath Port Talbot Council
Richard Colman (RC) - Neath Port Talbot Council
Alastair Ross (AR) - Association of British Insurers
Dermot Kehoe (DH) - Flood Re
James Owen (JO) - Welsh Government

Committee members

Darren Thomas (DT) - Pembrokeshire County Council
Geraint Edwards (GE) - Conwy County Borough Council
Andrew Stone (AS) - Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC
Jean-Francois Dulong (JFD) - Welsh Local Government Association
Karen Potter (KP) - Open University
Paul Blackman (PB) - Wallingford Hydro Solutions
David Harris (DH) - Independent Consultant
Anne-Marie Moon (AM) - JBA Consulting
Jeremy Parr (JP) - Natural Resources Wales

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Mike Wellington (MW) - WSP Consultation
Natalie Haines (NH) - Mott MacDonald
Catherine Wilson (CW) - Cardiff University
Lorna Davis (LD) - National Farming Union Cymru

Observers

Emma Bergin - Flood Re

Apologies

Adrian Philpott (AP) - Dwr Cymru – Welsh Water

1 - 2. Apologies and introductions

Chair gave the apologies and introductions were made.

3. Declaration of interests

The Chair asked members of the committee to consider the papers and declare if they had any conflicts of interest, none were given. The Chair advised members that today's meeting will be recorded by the secretariat.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021, and matters arising

Draft minutes had been circulated for comment and subsequently published.

The Chair noted the action for MW to provide a note to discuss at Resources Sub-Committee (RSC) meeting in February on the lack of educational facilities in North Wales providing appropriate flood risk management courses.

MW provided an update, advising that he had spoken to various institutions in North Wales about what they can offer, and there are NVQs at ONC level for the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE), although there are no apprenticeship engineering degrees in the whole of Wales. He explained that if students in North Wales want to qualify to ICE as a civil engineer they will need to go to England to do so, potentially leading to a resource issue.

Action 1: MW to provide a note by the end of June for consideration at the next RSC meeting on the 7th July

The Chair also noted the action for JP to provide a paper on levy raising powers to the Welsh Government.

JP advised this action was ongoing, and they had not submitted a paper to the Welsh Government yet, although had initiated discussions around the principals of it.

Action 2: – JP to provide an update at the next RSC meeting on the 7th July

5. Chair's announcements

The Chair provided an update on his activities since the fifth meeting of the Committee in January 2021.

Given the workload associated with the two Sub-Committee's, his participation in other events since the January meeting had been limited. He was unable to attend the quarterly meeting with the Chairs of the English RFCCs in February, although he planned to attend the next meeting, which takes place in June.

In February, he had a further catch-up meeting with Elizabeth Haywood, who, as a Natural Resources Wales Board member, chairs their Flood Risk Management Committee. The main topics for discussion were NRW's review of the February 2020 floods, and the work of the Resources Sub-Committee, including potential implications for NRW.

In February, he also attended two meetings of the Flood and Coastal Risk Programme Board, with a further meeting in May. The meetings in February focused mainly on the programme for 2021-22. There were discussions on the 2020-21 floods, and their impacts on members of staff in FCERM teams. He explained there are significant concerns about the capacity of Risk Management Authorities, and their ability to bring forward schemes for the pipeline. As one mechanism for responding to these concerns, initiatives to work with the education sector in strengthening training and recruitment are increasingly being explored.

The Programme Board meeting in May was able to review the out-turn for 2020-21, and to firm up on the programme for 2021-22. The out-turn was impressive, with full spends across Wales being achieved for both revenue and capital, despite the challenges represented by the pandemic, by the scale of flooding events, and the need for significant reprioritisation.

6. Items from the regional groups

DT provided an update on the South West Wales Flood Risk Management Group, where he last attended on the 27 January.

In terms of the region submitting thoughts and ideas to the Policy and Legislation Sub-Committee (PLSC), he advised that he had been in touch with flooding and coastal risk groups to encourage feedback from across the region. He had also been in touch with the flood risk group to organise the presentation for today's meeting from Neath Port Talbot Council.

In terms of work regarding barriers to climate change and coastal adaptation, DT had sought feedback from the regional groups in response to queries raised by PB.

Recently JFD has been looking at Research and Development with DT providing feedback from the regional groups.

DT advised there had not been a Coastal Group meeting since the last time the committee met, although he understood there has been a meeting to discuss the West of Wales Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) refresh, which involved the coastal group members.

GE provided an update on the North Wales group, with nothing to report following the meeting on the 25th March.

AS provided an update on the South East Wales group, with the group having met twice since January, one an extra-ordinary meeting. The group has discussed the feedback provided to the Policy and Legislation sub-committee regarding the FCERM assets. The main discussion was on the need for local strategy review, involving resources and finance. AS advised, there was general support for a review, but again the issue came up about the operational issues,

with difficulties obtaining the resources and authorisation within the authorities.

AS explained that there had been discussion with an initiative through WLGA regarding better links with CSS Wales, specifically the Environment group. He confirmed that the chairs of all three regional groups are going to meet to discuss how the regional groups can dovetail with CSS Wales to gain a better understanding of what is going on.

AS confirmed operational issues were raised, with the main concern being the interface between land drainage and the sewer networks assets.

7. Presentation by James Davies, Drainage Manager, with support from Steve Owen, Highways & Drainage Services Manager and Richard Colman, Drainage Engineer, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

SO provided an introduction, then JD gave a presentation to the Committee on Storm Christoph and an overview of the Skewen flood event, which included the multi-agency emergency response and the transition into the recovery stage.

8. Presentation by Alastair Ross, Assistant Director, Head of Public (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), Association of British Insurers

AR gave a presentation to the Committee on accessing insurance for flood risk communities.

9. Presentation by Dermot Kehoe, Communications and Transition Director, Flood Re

DH gave a presentation to the Committee on how Flood Re makes insurance more available and affordable for people at risk of flooding.

The slides from all the presentations will be shared with the Committee.

10. Reports

10.1. Agriculture (Wales) White paper, James Owen, Deputy Director, Land Management Reform Division, Welsh Government; and to note the Committee's response to the consultation.

JO thanked the committee for their responses to the Agriculture (Wales) White Paper and earlier consultations, confirming that the White Paper consultation had closed on the 25th March. He advised that they are currently in the process of analysing the responses and will be developing a Government response. In terms of timetables they are currently working with an independent analysis company with the aim of publishing responses in July, and with the Minister's agreement, a Government response.

He explained that they would be meeting with the Minister for Climate Change to discuss the new Government's ambitions and the planned direction of travel. In his team they are currently working on the detail of the proposed sustainable farm scheme. He noted the Committee's concerns around the lack of reference to flood risk management in the White Paper. JO suggested that it is important

to consider the previous Green Paper consultation and the White Paper together, as the Green Paper set out in a lot more detail the types of actions expected to be undertaken on farms in exchange for repayment including actions to mitigate flooding.

JO explained to the Committee that what they would see in the next stage, would be more around the specific actions to be undertaken on farms to deliver a range of flood mitigation measures. He reassured the Committee that flood mitigation does remain one of the strategic environmental outcomes of the new proposed scheme.

JO confirmed, subject to Ministerial agreement, that they will be publishing the first iteration of the scheme in the autumn, at which time they will be looking at running a series of co-design events. He proposed that his team would continue to engage with the Committee on the design of the scheme, and that sometime between July and November it would be useful to come back to the Committee to discuss proposals and obtain their views.

JO concluded his update by discussing the big picture timetable. He advised that subject to the views of the incoming Government, the intentions are to introduce an Agriculture Bill in the Senedd next year, with this primary legislation providing the Welsh Ministers powers to introduce the scheme. Then the view is to seek Royal Assent in 2023, and start introducing the scheme to farmers in 2024. The transition period for the new scheme would then take place over a number of years.

The Chair thanked JO for his comprehensive update and responded to his offer of further consultation with the Committee to draw his attention to the date of the next meeting on 23rd September. He offered JO a place on the agenda for the meeting, to enable him to talk to the Committee about where they have got to, where things are going next, and whether or not they can specifically consult the Committee on a firm set of proposals at that stage.

JO welcomed the invite, confirming the timing of the next meeting worked well.

JP advised that some of the elements raised in the Committee's consultation response JO had addressed. He pointed out the linkages with the Welsh Government's flood risk strategy, and the strong messages in there around natural flood management and nature based solutions, with a joined up approach required around the strategic picture of the Welsh Government. He also commented that there was a fair bit of emphasis on flood mitigation and not so much on coastal adaptation, with a need to adapt for the future due to climate change. He also drew attention to the importance of catchment scale as well as farm scale approaches. He explained that managing the huge quantities of water requires big-ticket considerations, as well as leaky dams and natural flood management solutions.

JO agreed that it was vital his team join up closely with colleagues within the Welsh Government around flood mitigation, and delivering a range of outcomes around nature based solutions. He agreed on the point around farm and catchment scale, and advised that they will be considering water management techniques as just one of a suite of actions. He stressed it is important to highlight the detail which sits behind some of these actions, with resource being allocated to also look at the evidence base. He confirmed that some of the actions would be delivering multiple outcomes, which can be achieved through on-farm deliverables.

JP advised that there was an appetite in flood risk communities to look at these issues on a catchment scale. He explained that Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC had set up a forum to look at strategic flood risk management planning, and that the challenge for NRW would be to replicate this across all 22 Local Authorities.

LD advised that she represented National Farmers Union (NFU) Cymru on the Committee. She suggested there was an opportunity for the Welsh Government to improve engagement with the farming community through officers.

JO agreed that engagement with the industry, both stakeholders and farmers is crucial in the implementation of transformational change. He confirmed that his team engage regularly with NFU Cymru on both the policy development and evidence provision, where the team share the outcomes of the evidence and seek input.

LND reiterated that work is occurring across policy areas. She advised that deep dive sessions have occurred with the Welsh Government and NRW. These have looked at large scale catchment approaches and different forms of Natural Flood Management.

10.2. Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee Annual Report 2021

To agree the Annual Report

The Chair thanked everyone for their input, suggesting discussions in this morning's session highlighted the range of issues the Committee is engaging with currently.

The Chair discussed the more significant achievement in terms of actual outputs is the extent to which the Committee is being able to influence Welsh Government policy, particularly in terms of input into the National Strategy and planning policy.

The Chair suggested that on the agricultural front there was still work to be done, although the dialogue in the morning session was helpful, and provided a platform for future discussions.

He confirmed that some of the significant outputs of the Committee will be dependent on the reports of the 2 sub-committees, and that this was still a work in progress. This Annual Report does briefly capture the progress these sub-

committees have made. It is not, however, currently able to draw on any of the conclusions or recommendations at this point.

JFD asked whether in light of the new Ministry, this should be reflected in the Annual rReport. Looking ahead, he wondered whether the Committee should acknowledge alignment of the work programme with the wider Ministerial Climate Change portfolio, recognising the Committee has already integrated a lot of the policy areas into our work.

The Chair suggested it would be difficult to anticipate what the implications of a new Ministry would be, although clearly there will be implications for the Committee, and to capture that in the Annual Report for last year would be over optimistic.

AF confirmed that the new Cabinet Ministers have been appointed, and we now have a substantial department dealing with climate change. He suggested there would likely be significant implications for policy work and Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) as a result of the new administration, particularly given the manifesto commitments in our area.

AF advised that there are enhanced ambitions regarding flood risk management, primary legislation commitments in relation to sustainable drainage systems, coal tips safety, as well as areas such as designation of new national parks, national forest and inland waters. All of which will impinge on the flood and coastal risk management agenda.

AF confirmed that he and his team would be talking to the Minister and Deputy Minister to understand their ambitions, priorities and interests, and will report back to colleagues and the Committee in due course.

The Chair agreed that the Committee would need to pick up on the implications of the new Ministerial changes, as well as the new programme for Government.

The Committee agreed the Annual Report.

10.3. Resources Sub-Committee (RSC)

To receive the Interim Report of the Sub-Committee, and the minutes of its meetings held on 11.02.21 and 14.04.21

The Chair noted that as the report pulls together the conclusions of the minutes of the previous meetings, he wasn't going to review them.

DH said how impressed he was with the amount of work the Resource Sub-Committee (RSC) had covered, and congratulated KP on the inequalities issues she had highlighted and taken forward.

KP responded on the inequalities dimension, confirming the initial broad request was to ascertain what academic literature there was on inequalities in flood risk.

Action 3: KP to share the synthesis of the literature with the Committee

KP advised there was some evidence of inequalities in Wales, with deprivation on the floodplain, with implications in terms of ethnicity as well. She had been looking at communication with communities, in particular research that had been done on the difficulty on reaching these communities.

The Chair discussed processes in terms of the way in which scheme pipelines are prioritised, to ensure inequality issues are taken into account. He confirmed the Committee has been assured that the Communities at Risk Register (CaRR) does facilitate this.

NH confirmed the CaRR is available to download from [DataMapWales](#)

JP suggested that although the CaRR is in the public domain, there does need to be improved visibility.

The Chair advised that the report back to the Committee in September would focus on this as an issue.

JFD had concerns on whether in time the programme itself would focus investment on specific areas, potentially resulting in increased inequalities.

The Chair noted that some of the research suggests that approaches to partnership funding in England do run the risk of prioritising schemes in more affluent parts of the country. He suggested that this would need to be considered when the Committee evaluates partnership-funding opportunities here in Wales.

KP agreed, advising that the academic literature suggested that individuals in deprived areas have difficulty in raising funding.

The Chair concluded the discussions on the partnership funding inequalities issues, suggesting the Committee had a lot of work to do on this before submitting any recommendations.

The Chair provided an update on the Sub-Committee interim report, which summarised the process the Sub-Committee has undertaken in looking at the resources issue, with section, 5 setting out the main headings in which the Sub-Committee had sub divided their investigations.

The Chair explained the purpose of the other sections of the report, which included issues identified in the resourcing of flood risk management in Wales:

- Capital Funding;
- Revenue Funding;
- Skills and Capacity;
- FCERM Pipeline;
- Governance and Collaboration;
- Communities and the Third Sector

The Chair advised that each of the identified issues has been assigned to a Sub-

Committee member to coordinate.

Each member who was present for the afternoon session provided an update on the identified issues they are leading on.

The Chair noted the broad reflection of the work of the Sub-Committee and invited comments or questions from members of the Committee not on the RSC.

Committee members provided comments.

JM confirmed that he would share the interim report with his wider team for comment, particularly Sarah Dafydd who represents the Welsh Government on the RSC.

Action 4: JM to share report and feedback with the teams comments

JM noted the flood inequality issue was a consideration when developing the National Strategy, Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15, and it would result in a change of policy with regard to development in flood risk areas.

JM advised that there had been a number of reports on this, which have influenced our policy. JM explained that the existing TAN15 has a policy which allows certain vulnerable developments on existing floodplains for regeneration areas. The new TAN15 will be correcting that with a much clearer policy to not allow vulnerable homes in a floodplain, and having a regeneration area as an exception.

10.4. Policy and Legislation Sub-Committee (PLSC)

To receive the minutes of its meeting held on 23.03.21.

The Chair noted AP absence and asked JP and AS to provide an update on the

meeting.

JP advised the PLSC had asked for views on what the issues are associated with policy and legislation, what we are interested in exploring further and what we perceive as problems.

JP noted that there was a strong link with Measure 1 in Welsh Government's strategy, and that the particular section of the Strategy largely relates to roles and responsibilities.

MEASURE 1: Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee to establish the scope and consider the need for changes to legislation to clarify and support the delivery of FCERM in Wales by 2022

JP explained that to make the task manageable and to focus the PLSC efforts, they agreed on 3 "big ticket" themes:

- Flood Assets - issues associated with designation and roles and responsibilities
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Adaptation & resilience both coastal and inland.

JP suggested roles and responsibilities can often be confusing to people, he also mentioned how roles and responsibilities can overlap, and perhaps duplicate.

JP confirmed they would like to focus on a forward-looking agenda in regards adaptation resilience. The PLSC need to consider whether policy is fit for the future, adaptable in relation to climate change.

AS provided an update from the perspective of the assets sub-group. They had focused on definitions in terms of what constitutes a Flood Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) asset. He confirmed that LD is also reviewing the definition in regards to assets in rural communities.

AS explained that the group is also pulling together a list of 3 manageable priority issues within the general assets environment.

JP advised that the next meeting of the group is on the 24th June, where they will look across the 3 themes. He explained the interim report for the group is planned for September, with the final report due in May 2022.

JP also advised that JFD would be assisting the group to look at roles and responsibilities.

10.5. Committee Work Programme

To receive the report of the Chair, and to consider the recommendation that the updated Work Programme be approved.

The Chair reviewed and explained the updates to the work programme, which overall related to re-phasing of the timings of the themes.

JM provided an update on “*Theme 8 - Contribute to the preparation of the Coastal Adaptation Guidance*”, he advised that the Welsh Government have had early discussions with WLGA and NRW recently, with the work having been postponed from last year due to the flooding and the work on the Strategy.

Theme 9 was discussed “Influence research needs and programmes, and disseminate research once complete.”

JFD raised the issue of the lack communication and engagement with practitioners with regards to Research and Development (R&D) projects.

JFD agreed to be a conduit, assisted by KP, to highlight useful projects.

Action 5: JFD to provide a list of useful research pipeline projects for the September meeting.

The Chair noted that the Committee frequently received invitations to provide their views on R&D projects very late in the day, and requested earlier engagement where possible.

JP suggested that it was extremely difficult to keep abreast of the R&D programme.

JM explained that Welsh Government's flood branch doesn't have a research arm, and this is something that has really suffered with the resource implications within the team.

JM confirmed the research priorities that the Welsh Government had put forward at the R&D Theme Advisory Group plenary meeting were:

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Response to Climate Emergency
- Behavioural change, Community engagement and outreach
- Adaptation
- Informed/intelligent Asset Management

The Committee approved the work programme

11. Any other business previously notified to the Chair

JM advised that the potential publication date of TAN15 would be September. He confirmed that Jonni Tomos (planning) would come to the Committee with a near final draft for the Committee to comment on, prior to its publication.

12. Date and venue of next meeting – 23rd

September 2021, Newport Civic Centre, Godfrey Road, Newport, NP20 4UR.

The Chair concluded the meeting.

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